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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written submission by the Public Defender's Office of Georgia*

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Human Rights Council hereby transmits the communication submitted by the Public Defender's Office of Georgia**, reproduced below in accordance with rule 7(b) of the rules of procedures described in the annex to Council resolution 5/1, according to which participation of national human rights institutions is to be based on arrangements and practices agreed upon by the Commission on Human Rights, including resolution 2005/74 of 20 April 2005.

* National human rights institution with A status accreditation from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

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Annex

Submission of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia to the 39th Session of the Human Rights Council on the Rights of Older Persons in Georgia

Mr. President, distinguished members of the Human Rights Council, Ladies and Gentlemen, first and foremost, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the Human Rights Council. It is a great honor to speak on the behalf of the "A" status human rights institution - the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia, in response to the report of the Independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons on her mission to Georgia.

Also let me thank the Independent Expert Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Mate for the comprehensive and valuable piece of work she produced after her mission to Georgia.

First of all, let me start with the positive steps taken by the Georgian government towards protection of the rights of older persons. In 2013, the government of Georgia, together with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) designed a roadmap for mainstreaming population ageing issues in Georgia in accordance with the Madrid International Plan of Action. This Roadmap served as a basis for the 'State Policy Concept on the Ageing Issue in Georgia', adopted by the Parliament in May, 2016.

The Action Plan for 2017-2018 was approved only in November, 2017, therefore, the responsible state agencies have only one year to fulfil their obligations under the Action Plan and the process of the State Policy Concept implementation is hampered. Also, there is no regular and stable mechanism ensuring cooperation between the state agencies on the given issue.

Despite some improvements, there are numbers of challenges and obstacles, which have to be addressed. Based on our work we can conclude that the majority of older people do not have access to adequate housing, social services and protection mechanisms, and therefore, they live in poverty, lacking the shelter and are under risk of isolation. Acts of violence against them are quite frequent.

There is an evident lack of housing to ensure adequate living for older persons. Quantifying the actual need is difficult, as disaggregated statistical information regarding living conditions for different groups are not available.

Another challenge in ensuring the independent living of older persons is related to the age discrimination in the area of employment – during hiring, promotion and training of employees.

Ensuring the age-friendly environment in the country is also problematic. Access to means of transport for people with special needs, and connectivity in remote and rural areas are important issues of concern, in particular when it comes to reaching hospitals or other care facilities.

Despite the improvement in the quality of elderly health care provided by the State Health insurance Program, the practice revealed that there are frequent complaints related to insurance administration, including the waiting lines at the medical facilities, uncovered medicine costs and in some cases neglect from the side of medical personnel.

Elderly people often become victims of violence, including from family members. There are difficulties in identifying instances of violence and, when identified, the authorities often fail to undertake adequate responses to protecting victims from repeat acts of violence.

As a concluding remark, I do hope that all recommendations envisaged in the Report will be taken seriously by the concerned state institutions and we will witness obvious and tangible developments and we are ready to continue our constructive work with Georgian government in that regard.

Moreover we expresses reediness to fulfil the recommendation regarding our office and structure to make our work more effective while promoting human rights of older persons.